

ASSA 2021 RECOGNITION AWARD

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| CATEGORY | : | Customer Service |
| ORGANIZATION | : | Employees' Compensation Commission |
| CONTACT PERSON | : | Stella Zipagan-Banawis |
| NAME OF PROJECT | : | ECC Policy Measures to Mitigate the Continuous Impact of CoViD-19 to Filipino Workers |
| OBJECTIVE AND NATURE OF PROJECT | : | To give protection to workers both in the private and public sectors in the event of work-related contingencies in the time of CoViD-19 |
| WHY IT SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED | : | <p>The global challenges brought by the CoViD-19 pandemic has tested everyone's resilience. Yet, despite this uniquely uncertain circumstance that we are all experiencing now, the Employees' Compensation Commission (ECC) has remained relentless in the pursuit of its mission, particularly in providing a more responsive and relevant package of benefits and services to all Filipino workers and their beneficiaries.</p> <p>Following its strong policy responses to the CoViD-19 pandemic in 2020, ECC continues to formulate more policies and come up with new guidelines to ensure that the ECP is relevant and responsive to the needs of the Filipino workers and the changing landscape of work.</p> |
| SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT | : | In response to the pandemic and in support of the <i>Bayanihan to Heal as One Act</i> (Republic Act 11469) and Administrative Order No. 30 that calls for the immediate mobilization of assistance and the formulation and issuance of rules and guidelines on the grant of any benefit as temporary emergency measure and to ease the burden on the people affected by the imposition of community quarantine, the ECC passed and approved policy issuances in the first half of 2021 geared to enhance and provide additional ECP benefits. |

COVID-19 as Occupational and Work-Related Disease

The Employees' Compensation Commission has officially listed CoViD-19 as an occupational and work-related disease, bringing the total number of occupational and work-related diseases listed in Annex A of the Amended Rules on Employees' Compensation to 33.

With the nature of CoViD-19 and the alarming trend on the number of confirmed cases reported every day, the ECC recognizes the risk present and the need to make the process in claiming EC benefits easier.

One-Time Financial Assistance of ₱20,000.00 for EC Pensioners

The first half of 2021 also welcomed the signing of Administrative Order No. 39 by President Rodrigo Duterte on April 19, 2021. AO 39 grants a one-time financial assistance of Php 20,000 to Employees' Compensation pensioners in both the public and private sector in order to alleviate the financial burdens of EC pensioners due to the CoViD-19 pandemic.

The release of the financial assistance has started in June 2021 and will benefit more than 31,000 EC pensioners who need not apply for the financial assistance as the Social Security System (SSS) and the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS), the ECC's administering agencies, shall process and release according to the EC pension process.

One-Time Top-up Cash Assistance for Claimants in the Private Sector due Work-Related COVID-19

A significant percentage of those who contracted CoViD-19 sprung from the country's workforce and the number is expected to continue to rise as the battle against the virus persists. The ECC understands that workers need more help now more than ever.

Through Board Resolution No. 21-04-13, the Commission aims to provide a one-time top-up cash

assistance of P30,000 to each worker in the private sector who has approved EC benefits due to work-related CoViD-19. The policy awaits the approval of the Office of the President of the Republic of the Philippines prior to its implementation. A counterpart measure is also contemplated for public sector workers who contracted COVID-19 because of work or the working environment.

WFH injuries now compensable under the EC Program

The ECC has moved to grant compensation to employees who suffer from disability or death due to injuries sustained while working from home. The Commission issued this policy in recognition of the alternative avenues and work arrangements employees carry out their work, driven by the development in telecommunications and innovations in technology and impelled by the CoViD-19 pandemic.

BR No. 21-03-09 creates a policy on the compensability of disability or death due to injuries sustained by employees while in the performance of their duties or specific tasks at their dwelling places or residences, provided that there is written directive or order from his or her employer requiring a work-from-home arrangement or the performance of a specific task within a specified period while working at home.

The policy also adheres to the Republic Act or R.A. No. 11165 otherwise known as the “Telecommuting Act” signed into law in 2018, which provides that employers in the private and public sectors may allow work-from-home arrangements or the performance of specific tasks within a certain period at residence or in the dwelling places of its employees with the use of telecommunication and/or computer technologies.

While the times remain uncertain, the ECC continues to be steadfast in its commitment to give Filipino workers a sound, responsive, and sustainable policies, programs, and services.

Complementary Kits for PWRDs

Despite the disruption brought by the pandemic, ECC did not waver in fulfilling its mandate to deliver timely, adequate, and meaningful benefits to all Filipino workers who meet work-related contingencies. The Commission also seeks to empower persons with work-related disabilities (PWRD) and restore their dignity and self-esteem by opening opportunities for them to return to the economic mainstream and be productive and active citizens.

The ECC continues to provide necessary rehabilitation services, skills and entrepreneurial training, and starter kits through its Katulong at Gabay sa Manggagawang may Kapansanan (KaGabay) Program. Recently, the ECC approved the granting of complementary kits of P10,000.00 to all PWRDs as early as three (3) months from receipt of starter kit grants upon satisfaction of proofs showing that their livelihood is viable or generating income. Previously, a PWRD who received P20,000.00 starter kit need to wait at least 1 year before availing the complementary kits.

All these policy measures were approved and issued with the goal of protecting Filipino workers from any work-related contingencies especially the COVID-19 pandemic, which has impacted all facets of life in the Philippines.